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DURBAR MAHILA SAMANWAYA COMMITTEE

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DURBAR MAHILA SAMANWAYA COMMITTEE – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), an organization of sex workers, functions as an exclusive forum of female, male and transgender sex workers and their children, from both brothel based and mobile populations. DMSC has 52 branches and a membership of about 40,000 sex workers across West Bengal, India. DMSC demands decriminalization of adult sex work in all its aspects, social recognition of sex work as a service sector occupation and establishment of sex workers' right to self-determination. DMSC also seeks to abolish or reform all laws which restrict the human rights of sex workers and limit their enfranchisement as full citizens.

Vision of Durbar:

Durbar seeks a world where all marginalized communities live in an environment with equal respects, rights status and dignity. We hope for a social order where there will be no discrimination based on class, caste, gender, religion or occupation. All the people of the world will live in peace and harmony.

Mission:

Its mission is to enhance a process of social and political change in order to establish rights, dignity and improvement of social status including quality of life for all sex workers as a part of the global movement to establish the rights of marginalized people through the following:

- Changing the attitude of the people towards marginalized people in general and towards the sex workers in particular.
- Strengthening the struggle for enhancing self-respect of sex workers.
- Changing the unjust and illogical practices, laws, customs and policies that surround sexual services and sex workers.
- Uniting sex workers and empowering them through capacity building.
- Challenging the power-based relations within and outside the sex sector.
- Building networks among various individuals, groups, organizations and movements.



In this year, Durbar reflected on the profound impact of the untimely passing of our Sir, our beloved Dr. Smarajit Jana. He was a medical doctor, a public health specialist, an epidemiologist, a researcher and academician, an ardent advocate for the response to HIV and the architect of India's national HIV response for key populations, a champion of human rights and the dignity of sex workers and most importantly the founder of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), a collective of sex workers, a winner of national and international honors and accolades, a

distinguished voice in domestic and global forums and much more. He succumbed to the devastating effects of COVID-19 on 8th May 2021. His visionary leadership and unwavering dedication laid the foundation for our mission and his absence is keenly felt by all.

He was a great leader, an incomparable professional and above all, a human being par excellence, he gave voice to the most vulnerable and the most marginalized to ensure they were heard and their dignity respected. He touched innumerable lives. Words are not enough to capture the range of his work and the difference he made to so many lives. What he did is etched in the hearts of the lives he touched with warmth, with love and with affection.

Despite the challenges posed by his sudden departure, the dedicated team at Durbar remains committed to realizing his vision and continuing the crucial work he started. As we press forward, we honor his legacy by redoubling our efforts to address the pressing needs of those most vulnerable, ensuring that the impact of Dr. Jana's legacy endures through our continued commitment to positive change.

Activities of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and its sister organizations in the year 2021 – 2022

The coronavirus pandemic outbreak became a global threat in 2020, but it continued even in the second quarter of 2021. The governments from most of the countries including India continued with strict precautionary measures to reduce the coronavirus spread such as physical distancing, closure of schools, colleges, airports, restaurants, shopping malls, and other places where the people might gather. Movement of transport was also strictly restricted. Income diminished to a minimum and many people had to carry out their jobs from home. The informal labour sector was affected much as there was hardly any job for them. An increase in the levels of anxiety and depression became possible psychological effects of isolation. The sex workers were much affected also.

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), like the previous year, firmly stood with the marginalized sex workers community during difficult time of pandemic caused by Corona virus and subsequent country wide lockdown followed by unlock and decided for all out support and assistance during and post lockdown period. The income of the sex worker community diminished but was not as minimal as the previous year as there were some transports for which customers, though less in number, visited the brothels. The fringed community with limited option for savings and without citizenry proofs faced a situation devoid of livelihood, basic and essential requirements of human living along with wraths of social stigma. Durbar continued with its demand for righteous citizenry guarantees and social entitlements for sex worker community like any other marginalized section of the society. Durbar continued to distribute relief among the sex workers with benevolent assistance from socio-religious organizations, generous individual donations and support from police department and elected representatives, in addition to a few donor agencies. Durbar distributed edible (rice, pulses, soyabean chunks, sugar and edible oil, potato and onions) packets and healthcare items; sanitizer, soap, toothpaste and sanitary napkins. Durbar managed to ensure food and other supplies for all sex workers and their families at different pockets of Kolkata metropolitan and districts. Durbar also distributed biscuits, oats, exercise books and colour pencils among the children of sex workers. The relief was extended to LGBT community

and other marginalized sections of society in various phases and concerted addressing of pandemic and subsequent livelihood situation. Durbar organized series of sensitization and awareness programmes among sex workers on Covid 19, behavioral practices to combat the pandemic and livelihood entitlements.

Durbar extended its hands of solidarity to sex workers of Alipurduar in north to Budge Budge in south of West Bengal. The sex workers of each red lights areas of Kolkata metropolis; Sonagachi, Bowbazar, Kalighat, Tollygunge, Metiaburz and others received food items and other essentials. In districts, the relief distributions have been facilitated at Alipurduar, Cooch Behar, Dinhata, Malda, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Dhulian, Baharampur and other places of Murshidabad district, Durgapur, Nabadweep, different red-light areas of Howrah and Hooghly districts; Seoraphuli, Domjur and others.

Awareness

- The dissemination of information regarding the outbreak of pandemic, governmental measures related to livelihood and medical guidelines / facilities, health and hygienic measures were put in place with proper visibility.
- Durbar had constantly informed the sex worker community about the hygiene and behavioral practice to check the infection and willing to disseminate the information regarding the governmental facilities, thus requested the state agencies to visibly advertise and impart the schemes and facilities to the community at their localities.

Relief Mechanism

Durbar managed to ensure food and other supplies for sex workers and their families at majority of the districts throughout the state with active assistance from elected representatives, civil and police administration, distinguished persons, philanthropic institutions and local clubs and last but not the least, the commoners. Though, Durbar covered a major length and breadth of geographical area where sex workers live but again the requirement



was not for once as the hardship continued. Durbar appealed for support from citizenry through social medium and continued with the campaign initiated previous year.

Durbar provided multiple rounds of relief drive for sex worker community and a set of arrangement and scheduling to address post lockdown crisis.

Red-light districts in Kolkata:

Rice, Pulse, Mustard Oil, Potato, Onion, Salt, Soyabean chunks, Biscuits, Sugar, Soap, Toothpaste, Sanitizer, Sanitary Napkins, Wheat flour and Vegetable were distributed among the sex workers' community in Sonagachi, Bowbazar, Rabindra Sarani, Ultadanga, Sethbagan, Rambagan, Tollygunge, Khidirpur, Kalighat, Chetla and Lakhar Math.

Red- Light districts outside Kolkata:

Rice, Pulse, Mustard Oil, Soyabean chunks, Biscuits, Soap, Sanitizer and Sanitary Napkins were distributed among the sex workers' community in Budge Budge, Diamond Harbour, Santipur, Nabadweep, Kalna, Siuri, Durgapur, Asansol, Bishnupur, Kharagpur, Mahisadol, Contai, Ghatal, Titagarh, Naihati, Baharampur, Domkal, Dhulian, Malda, Coochbehar, Alipurduar, Dinhata, Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Domjur, Amta, Uluberia, Rajgunj, Bandhaghat, Seoraphuli, Pandua, Sasan, Basirhat (Matia) and Kalinagar.

Cooked foods were also provided in many of the red light districts.

Beneficiaries among General populace and LGBT community affected by Lockdown were provided with relief were from Kadapara, Dhapa, Chingrighata, Tangra, Telinipara, Bhatpara, Dumdum and Janbazar. They were provided with Rice, Pulse, Mustard Oil, Soyabean chunks, Biscuits, Soap, Sanitizer, Sanitary Napkins and Toothpaste.

Establishing two social centres for Nachnis and Jhumurs in Purulia District (ETSC)

The ETSC Project in Purulia has successfully completed more than six years of its activities in two very remote and under developed areas, Senabona under Arsha Block and Kotshila under Jhaldah 2 Block. Our main target has been the Nachni and Jhumur community which are two of the most vulnerable communities suffering from extreme poverty, high illiteracy, poor health status, high birth-rates, and unhygienic living condition. Besides these, high rates of child labors, child marriage, and evil customs and various superstitions and social exclusion are the barriers of their development. We observed that due to lack of awareness, social stigma, illiteracy and poor economic condition, education stands a little or very often no chance of pursuance among the community members. But, during the project period through regular interactions, rapport building, awareness and motivational programmes under the ETSC Project, the community has become aware about the importance of education for their children. The community members are giving more importance to the health awareness of themselves and their children than ever before.

The project continued with education support for the children in both creche and learning section although there were some challenges due to Covid and lockdown situation. The education support continued from 25th January 2021. But the nutritional support could not be carried out from 18th May to 18th July 2021 due to precaution of Covid 19 and to abide the instruction of local administration, but later the education and nutrition support programmes started running smoothly. The nutritional support had to face some problems from local administration due to Covid and lockdown situation but maintained all precautions as best as possible.



Community members were made aware to take Covid vaccination. Many of community members got vaccinated and also encouraged others in getting vaccinated. The picture was very bad at the beginning of the vaccination programmes by the government. From August to September, many of the community members have taken vaccine and other members also expressed their desire to take vaccine. From October 2021 to January 2022 almost all community members have taken covid vaccination. On the other hand, it was also assured that the eligible children have got their covid vaccination from their schools. About 98% of the villagers have been vaccinated at both the locations (Senabona and Kotshila). 20 children who were eligible for vaccination were vaccinated at Kotshila center and 6 out of 17 eligible children were vaccinated at Senabona center.

The parents have become more aware than before to maintain cleanliness of their children. In the beginning of the FY-2021-22 children used to come without shoes or slipper, they also didn't cut their nails on time. These types of issues were raised in the community cum guardian meeting, and also hygiene related discussion was done with the children at regular intervals. As a result, in the month of August – September there was betterment in their practices. In the months of October to March the hygiene practice, like wearing shoes or slippers in the outside, washing hands both before and after taking food and while going to washroom, trimming of nails at frequent intervals, etc. has developed among the children. Though the staffs make them aware time to time.



The community members have become more aware than before regarding facilities and entitlements which are being provided by the government. After the years of intervention and awareness by the project staff, community members' awareness increased about government entitlement. For example, during the months of August to September most of the community members fill up form for government schemes from which they could be benefited. During the

month of February 2022, the project staffs helped community members to fill up their forms to get government entitlements through Duare Sarkar.

During the lockdown, the staff members of ETSC project at field level continued their duty as before avoiding many local and administrative challenges which included visit by police, local government staff in the villages to observe whether people are maintaining covid safety, social distance etc. or not.

Child labour has decreased due to lockdown in both the project sites. Most of the child labours used to go out with their parents, but for lockdown their parents didn't get any job opportunity for a long time. Thus, the number of incidences of child labour decreased. On the other hand, seasonal labours use to go for work mainly in the winter. That's why no case of child labour occurred during the months of April to September 2021. In November 2021 to January 2022, six children migrated with family as Child labour at Senabona; but with intervention from the CDAs two of them returned in the second week of December. At Kotshila five children migrated with their families as child labour. Home visits were made by the CDAs and Creche Mothers to personally meet the parents or contacted them over phone and made them understand the necessity of education for the children and the bad effects of child labour.



For the whole year, 2021 – 2022, no child marriage happened in both the project sites i.e., Senabona and Kotshila. We targeted to make all community members, youth group, parents of

children aware of harmful effects of child marriage and ensure zero child marriage. There was only one case of domestic violence in the whole year.

In the month of August, one time support was given by distributing ration among the Nachni community as well as food and learning aids among the children at both the day care centres on behalf of DMSC and Amra Padatik. Food aids and learning aids were distributed on 18.08.2021 and 19.08.2021 at the project areas in Purulia district. The beneficiaries were 90 children from Kotshila and 110 Children from Senabona site. On 20.08.2021 ration aids were distributed among 65 members of Nachni community by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee at project office, Surulia. The items distributed among children were Biscuits, Chhatu, Cake, Snacks (Jhuribhaja), Bournvita, Drawing Book, Colour Pencil (Crayons), Sharpener, Eraser, Pencil. Each package of ration aid distributed among Nachni community consisted of: Atta (wheat), Rice, Sugar, Dalda, Spices, Pulses, Sanitizer, Mask, Soap, Saree.

In the month of March 2022, Ration aid was distributed by USHA Cooperative among the SHG members of both centres i.e., 11.03.2022 at Senabona and 14.03.2022 at Kotshila site. 11 SHG members at Senabona and 9 SHG members at Kotshila got the ration aid support. The package consisted of Rice, Biscuit, Mustard Oil, Gram pulse, Mung pulse, Lentils Pulse, Sugar, Salt, Tea Leaf, Chili powder and Coriander powder.

International Sex Workers' Rights Day

3rd March is the International Sex Workers' Rights Day. The day was first celebrated in 2001 when over 10,000 sex workers gathered in ground adjoining Salt Lake Stadium, Kolkata, India for a sex worker festival, Milan Mela. Since then, different sex worker groups worldwide started observing 3rd March every year as International Sex Workers' Rights Day.

In 2022, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee in collaboration with Amra Padatik celebrated International Sex Workers' Rights day in different sex work sites including Sonagachi, the largest red light district in West Bengal, Kolkata. The gala evening was celebrated with varieties of cultural events like dance, drama and puppet show. Eminent persons from different walks of the society attended the programme.



The atmosphere was charged with energy and activism as sex workers' communities and their allies, came together to celebrate this significant day. Colorful banners and placards adorned with empowering slogans filled the air as the rally weaved through the narrow lanes of Sonagachi, symbolizing a collective call for the recognition and protection of sex workers' rights. Amidst the lively chants and the rhythmic beats of drums, the red light area transformed into a space of empowerment, resilience and advocacy, sending a powerful message about the importance of acknowledging and respecting the rights of sex workers.

Rally on International Workers' Day

On 1st of May, the heart of Sonagachi pulsed with a different rhythm as Durbar amplifying the voice of sex workers shone brightly on this memorable day of International Workers' Day. The streets of Sonagachi sounded with chants and calls for justice as the participants, comprised of courageous workers and passionate activists, marched together in solidarity. Banners and placards hoisted high, adorned with messages advocating for the rights and dignity of those engaged in the profession. Sex Workers community people demanded fair labor practices, access to healthcare, and social recognition for their invaluable contributions. This symbolic gathering not only highlighted the collective strength of the marginalized community but also served as a

poignant reminder of the ongoing struggle for equality and justice in the face of societal stigmatization.

Menstrual Hygiene Day

International Menstruation Hygiene Day was celebrated by Durbar on 28th May 2021, with the sex workers and also with the adolescent girls of the sex workers residing in these areas. Usage of clothes instead of napkins, during menstruation, was still a practice among some of the women and these clothes were neither washed nor cleaned and the disposal was also improper. Detailed discussions were held on this issue along with provision of Sanitary Napkins were made to the attendees, so as to increase its usage. We also discussed and explained to the sex workers of different areas on the verdict of the Hon'ble Supreme Court given on 19.05.2022, about the entitlement to equal protection of the law, sex workers should be provided with facilities or support similar to that available to those of sexual assault (if any such case arises in their case) and also on the media matter. We felt the sex workers understood the discussions we had during this project period and we also feel that these issues should be continuously discussed in other areas too.

26th Birthday of Durbar

On a vibrant and celebratory evening on 12th July 2021, Durbar celebrated its 26th birthday in different red light districts of West Bengal through a number of programmes. In the central office of Durbar (12/5 Nilmoni Mitra Street), all the community members celebrated the day with a traditional cake cutting program. Advocating for the rights of sex workers marked a significant milestone during its foundation day celebration. The event echoed with a sense of empowerment and solidarity as activists, supporters and sex workers themselves came together to commemorate the organization's journey in championing the cause. The atmosphere was filled with hope and resilience, as speeches highlighted the progress made in challenging societal stigmas and legal barriers that hinder the rights of sex workers. As the room reverberated with applause, it became clear that this foundation day was not just a celebration of the past, but a

reaffirmation of the ongoing battle for dignity, respect and equal rights for sex workers everywhere.

Rakhi Bandhan celebration in Durbar

In Sonagachi, Durbar created a compassionate spirit, organizing a unique celebration of Rakhi Bandhan by and for female sex workers on 22nd August 2021 at their project office. Through embracing sisterhood, these women tie rakhi symbolizing protection and solidarity, transcending societal stigmas.



Durga Puja in Sonagachi

This was the ninth year of Durga Puja of Durbar conducted from 11th October to 15th October 2021, was held at the juncture of Abinash Kabiraj Street and Masjid Bari Street in front of the Abinash Kabiraj Street Clinic with the theme of 'Amader lorai Sokoler utsab' which means fights are from sex workers but the festival is for all. Our Durga Puja became a symbolic step towards

dismantling stigma and discrimination associated with our profession, emphasizing the importance of treating sex workers with respect and providing them access to fundamental human rights. Through cultural performances, discussions and community engagement, the celebration not only underscores the importance of recognizing the rights of sex workers but also challenges societal perceptions and stigma, while creating an environment of acceptance, understanding and empowerment into mainstream society. This kind of approach not only celebrated the spirit of the festival but also served as a powerful platform for advocacy and social change in our own community that is often overlooked and misunderstood by mainstreamed population.



Bhai Phota celebration in Durbar

Bhai Phota celebration facilitated by Durbar, aimed at spreading love, acceptance and breaking down stigmas related to sex work trade. The exchange of heartfelt blessings and the tying of the sacred thread became a powerful symbol of unity and compassion, exemplifying the transformative potential of community-driven initiatives in embracing diversity and promoting understanding in the most unexpected of places took places in Sonagachi and Durbar unfolded the event quite actively on 6th November 2021 at its head office.

Shabar Adhikar Dibash

Every year 'Shabar Adhikar Dibash' is being celebrated on 30th December. This year also Birsha Munda Gram Unnayan Committee (an organization of Sabar) with active support from Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee celebrated Sabar Adhikar Dibash in Amlasole on 30th December 2021.

The four day long programme was held in two locations of Jhargram namely Lagadori and Amlasole. The main attraction of the programme was sports and cultural events which was initiated on 27th December 2021 and continued till 30th December 2021.

A two days Soccer competition (Sabar Cup) was organized during this festival along with other games like Handi Bhanga, 200 meter race, 800 meter race, musical chair, archery tournament etc. were organized for men, women and kids to celebrate the 'Dibash'. A total of 16 football team from different areas like Jhilmil, Belpahari, Binpur, Aamjharna, Kakrajhor, Ghotiduba etc. representing Sabar, Munda and Lodha communities participated in the Sabar Cup competition. On 30th December, 2021 the final match of football and archery competition took place where hundreds of men, women and children arrived at the ground to lend their support for respective team.



Various eminent personalities like MLA, member of Panchayat Samity, representatives of Amlasole Yuva Kalyan Samity, representatives of Birsha Munda Gram Unnayan Committee were also present in the programme and handed over the prizes to the winning participants.

Lokosanskriti Utsav 2022

Lokosanskriti Utsav was a transformative cultural celebration held in Surulia of Purulia district on 25th to 27th March 2022 aimed at empowering women through a vibrant display of folk and cultural programmes. This Utsav organized with the objective of engaging community and women's empowerment, showcased the rich tapestry of traditional arts and heritage.

Local women took center stage, demonstrating their talents in various folk arts, music, dance and crafts. The performances not only entertained the audience but also served as a platform to highlight the inherent strength and creativity of women in the community. The Utsav provided a space for these women to express themselves, fostering a sense of pride and confidence. By blending cultural festivities with empowerment initiatives, Lokosanskriti Utsav 2022 became catalyst for positive change in the rural community of Surulia.



Empowerment programme from DLSA & JJB with Nachni and Jhumur artist

In a picturesque rural area of Purulia, a transformative meeting unfolded, aiming to empower women artists specializing in Mukhosh art. Facilitators from District Legal Services Authority and Juvenile Justice Board provided workshops on refining techniques, marketing strategies and opportunities for collaboration to showcase their art work igniting a flame of creativity and self-assurance. This gathering not only celebrated the rich cultural heritage of Mukhosh art but also sparked a movement to show the voices and talents of women artisans in their local Nachni and Jhumur community.



Durbar and Self Regulatory Board

Self Regulatory Board for the sex workers community convened with a paramount focus on preventing underage girls from entering the sex work trade. With a collective commitment to ethical practices and safeguarding vulnerable individuals Durbar engaged in implementing stringent age verification protocols and to do this SRB has been playing a critical role. Emphasizing the importance of community outreach and support networks, Durbar proposed strategies to offer resources for at-risk youth, including access to counseling. Collaboratively, the board also recognized the imperative of establishing clear guidelines and accountability measures within the community to ensure compliance and protect the rights of all individuals involved. Out

of the 1280 girls that were brought to SRB this year, 4 were under aged girls. They were all sent back to their native places from where they came. The remaining 1276 girls were adult and they decided to continue with sex work as their profession.

COVID Vaccination Camp

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Durbar also undertook a commendable initiative by organizing a targeted Covid vaccination campaign for Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in various red light areas of Kolkata and also in other districts. Recognizing the vulnerability of this group to the virus and the potential for rapid transmission within their communities, Durbar implemented a comprehensive and inclusive vaccination strategy. The campaign involved extensive outreach efforts, education on the importance of vaccination and the provision of a safe and non-judgmental environment for FSWs to receive their vaccinations. Through such initiatives, Durbar played a crucial role in ensuring that the most vulnerable members of society are not left behind in the fight against the pandemic. By collaborating with local health authorities and community leaders, our organization facilitated access to vaccination centers, ensuring that FSWs could receive their doses conveniently and confidentially. This campaign exemplifies the vital role that played in promoting health equity and combating the spread of infectious diseases within this community.



Trans Parliament and awareness campaign of Balaram Dey Street Anandam

"Organizing of the West Bengal Transwomen Parliament," organized by Durbar and its sister organization Balaram Dey Street Anandam aimed to address the various challenges faced by the transgender (TG) community in India, including issues of discrimination, limited access to education and other social issues. The programme sought to organize a platform, the Transwomen Parliament, to bring together representatives from different TG collectives to discuss and address these significant issues. The Parliament successfully united various TG groups and led to the creation of a loose platform with a special focus on issues such as the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, which pose a threat to the citizenship rights of the TG community.



During this period, several activities were carried out, including the organization of the West Bengal Transwomen Parliament and an Interactive Session with LGBTQK+ communities. The Parliament was attended by 80 representatives, including members of the existing West Bengal Transgender Development Board, and resulted in the development of a charter of demands submitted to the local provincial government. Furthermore, the program led to a section of the TG community engaging in campaign and research work on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis against HIV, addressing the considerably high prevalence of HIV among the TG community in India due to risky sexual behavior and practices.

The program's success is evident in its ability to unite various TG groups under a common platform, the TG Parliament, and to champion their issues collectively. The Parliament's activities and subsequent campaign efforts have highlighted the pressing issues faced by the TG community in India, including the threat of losing citizenship rights due to challenges in producing necessary documentation, such as papers and documents, for the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens. Additionally, the programme has been instrumental in revitalizing the functioning of the West Bengal Transgender Development Board and has led to proactive steps by the government to improve the quality of life for the TG community and address socially imposed stigma and discrimination.

**Capacity building training programme and Crisis
Management for COVID from GFW**

Durbar, with funding support from Global Fund for Women, successfully conducted capacity-building training programme for female sex workers of Sonagachi red light area. This initiative helped us to provide support in the form of mask and hand sanitizers to around 9500 female sex workers, 300 transgender people and 12000 indirect beneficiaries. Durbar organized a Strategic Planning workshop with all the managerial staff and Executive Board of the organization as a capacity building activity with support from Global Fund for Women, so as to strengthen the activities of the organization as well as prepare the strategy to tackle with similar pandemic situations in future.



In the midst of global COVID 19 pandemic, crisis management in red light areas has proven to be a challenging yet crucial endeavor in the year 2021-2022. In collaboration with Global Fund for Women (GFW), Durbar has played a pivotal role in addressing the unique challenges faced by sex workers within these vulnerable communities in various red light areas of West Bengal. Durbar provided dry rations, masks, hand sanitizers, disinfectant materials and sanitary napkins for sex workers and other marginalized community members during and post lock down period as a consequence of Covid-19 Pandemic. Our organization also did advocacy with a number of civil society organizations, socio-religious organizations and individuals who lent their support during the lock down phase. We also strengthened our network by making friends with like-minded rights based organizations.

CREA campaign in Red Light Areas

With support from CREA (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action), Durbar dedicated to the rights and well-being of sex workers, a feminist human rights campaign emerged in Sonagachi area on the day of International Sex Workers' Rights Day. On that that we organized campaign in various red light areas in which we discussed with the female sex workers not only about their rights but also interacted with them with their social entitlements, on various sexual and reproductive health issues through Q&A sessions and also on violence perpetrated out to them.



This innovative initiative seeks to address the unique challenges faced by women in the sex trade, recognizing their agency and advocating for their fundamental human rights. The campaign created a multifaceted approach, combining community outreach, legal advocacy and

awareness-building activities. CREA and Durbar are working hand-in-hand to challenge societal norms, combat discrimination and empower women in various red light areas in West Bengal to assert sex workers rights with dignity. These collaborative efforts strived to create a more inclusive and equitable society for all women. We feel we are on track with the overall aims and plans.

AES Project at Muzaffarpur

A project titled 'Intervention research to institute a community based AES program to prevent and intervene AES cases to reduce mortality and morbidity in Muzaffarpur, Bihar' which was initiated in March 2020 and continued in 2021 also. The primary objective is to develop a community based AES intervention strategy which will reduce number of cases of AES, Real time interventions in cases of AES to reduce mortality and morbidity among the vulnerable communities in Muzaffarpur area.



Regular contacts were kept with the health workers in the three designated blocks in Muzaffarpur where we started working. The project involves regular contact with health workers in three designated blocks - Bochaha, Mussahari and Minapur where awareness programmes were conducted in August and September 2021. These programs, which saw participation from 30 to 40 community members per session, aimed to educate the public about AES and its prevention. Meetings with stakeholders, including ex-Panchayat members and local nursing home staff, were also held. Additionally, a training session for all the Health Workers involved in the AES Research Project was conducted on the final day of the second visit. The Health Workers have been maintaining contact with villagers and providing support in case of emergencies. The project has

increased the number of awareness programs post-lockdown and plans to cover more villages in the three blocks. Despite the intention to meet with the BDOs of the blocks, this could not be scheduled due to the declaration of Panchayat Elections in Bihar.



Urgent Action Fund for updating safety and security

On the aspect of organizational safety and security, Durbar in collaboration with Urgent Action Fund installed cameras in both the office premises of Durbar and residential home of Barupur, allowing management-level staff to view the cameras through a mobile app, thus significantly increasing security. Through this project Durbar also improved the organization's preparedness for future risks and threats by introducing new CCTV setups at three sites and emphasizing the need for maintenance to ensure their effectiveness for the future years.



Research on PPE kit production

On this year, Durbar has marked on a crucial research endeavor focused on PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) kit production with University of Manchester with the aim of enhancing healthcare accessibility and safety during COVID period, this initiative delved into various facets of PPE making, distribution and efficacy. Durbar collaborated with various experts, healthcare professionals and local communities, the research endeavor aims to not only optimize the production process but also ensure that the resultant PPE meets stringent quality standards and addresses the specific needs of outreach workers, peer educators and other community workers. Through such concerted efforts, Durbar begin to contribute significantly to health resilience and pandemic preparedness in various red light areas by creating PPE kit.


